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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/14/2017

TAGS: PREF PREL KS KN TH

SUBJECT: ROKG PREFERS SEPARATE DEMARCHE TO THAILAND ON
DPRK REFUGEES

REF: STATE 80442

Classified By: A/POL Brian McFeeters. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) On May 12, Park Ji-hyun, Deputy Director of MOFAT's Inter-Korean Policy Division, expressed appreciation that the USG supported the ROKG's efforts to resist the Royal Thailand Government's proposal that all North Korean asylum seekers travel from Thailand to South Korea before being processed for possible third country resettlement. However, Seoul's view was that it would be better to pursue separate demarches to avoid the perception of "ganging up" on the RTG, which could complicate USG and ROKG refugee pipelines, Park explained. The ROKG preferred that the USG approach the RTG, bilaterally, to urge that approved North Korean applicants be allowed to leave directly for the United States. She also suggested revising the draft U.S. points to Thailand (reftel) to reflect separate demarches.

12. (C) Asked if the ROKG would demarche the RTG soon, Park noted that Seoul needed to reach an inter-agency consensus on next steps. Given Seoul's preference for separate demarches, timing of the USG's approach to Thailand need not be tied to ROKG action, she concluded.

STANTON